

INMATE TELEPHONE SERVICE

Background

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has rules that ensure consumers are able to reach their preferred long distance carriers from public telephones, hotel phones, etc. served by operator service providers (OSPs). These rules also apply to telephones at correctional institutions, such as telephones located in visitation areas. The rules do not apply, however, to “inmate only” telephones. In most cases, an inmate is only allowed to make collect calls and does not have a right to access his or her preferred carrier from an “inmate-only” telephone.

Correctional facilities are exempt due to the exceptional set of circumstances under which such service is provided, including restrictions on the number of calls that can be placed by individual inmates, call duration or calling hours. These factors may influence rates.

Identifying Rates for Collect Calls from Prisons

When a collect call is made, each OSP of inmate operator services must identify itself to the person receiving the inmate’s call before connecting any interstate (between different states), domestic interexchange telephone call. Each of the prison OSPs must disclose immediately thereafter how the receiving party may obtain rate quotations (before connecting). Additionally, the OSP must permit that party to terminate the telephone call at no charge before the call is connected.

Complaints – Where to File

To complain about rates for intrastate (within a state) collect calls from public phones in prisons, contact the state public utilities commission in the state where the call originated and terminated. To complain about interstate and international rates, file your complaint with the FCC.

How to File a Complaint with the FCC

You can file a complaint by either e-mail (internet: fccinfo@fcc.gov), the Internet (www.fcc.gov/cgb/complaints.html), telephone 1-888-225-5322 (voice) or 1-888-835-5322 (TTY) or mail.

Your complaint letter should include:

- Name, address and telephone number where you can be reached during the business day;
- The telephone number involved with your complaint;
- As much specific information about your complaint as possible;
- A description of the steps you have taken to resolve the complaint yourself;
- The names and telephone numbers of the company employees that the you talked with in an effort to resolve the complaint, and the dates that you talked with these people;
- Copies of bills listing any disputed charges (circle the disputed charges on the bill itself); and
- The relief you are requesting (such as adjustment of charges).



If filing your complaint by mail, you should send it to:

Federal Communications Commission
Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

You can also contact the FCC's Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau for general information in the following ways:

via Internet: www.fcc.gov/cgb
By Telephone: 1-888-CALL-FCC (voice) and: 1-888-TELL-FCC (TTY).

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To receive information on this and other FCC consumer topics through the Commission's electronic subscriber service, click on www.fcc.gov/cgb/emailservice.html.

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